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REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

BJC Magazine

New extensive report on
Christian nationalism
and January 6

AMANDA TYLER on rooting
out Christian nationalism

HOLLY HOLLMAN on
Ketanji Brown Jackson

Saving the sacred spaces of
our Indigenous neighbors

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM AND THE JANUARY 6, 2021 INSURRECTION



FAITH FREEDOM FOR ALL

The dangers of Christian nationalism

Since launching the Christians Against Christian Nationalism initiative in 2019, BJC has seen more and more conversation about the political ideology, particularly after it was on display during the attack at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. But, that is not the only example of Christian nationalism facing our world today. It continues to show up in large and small ways, and it will take generations to dismantle.

Amanda Tyler looks at DISMANTLING CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM on page 3, and we share more about a major report on CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM AND JANUARY 6, led by BJC and the Freedom From Religion Foundation, on pages 6-9.

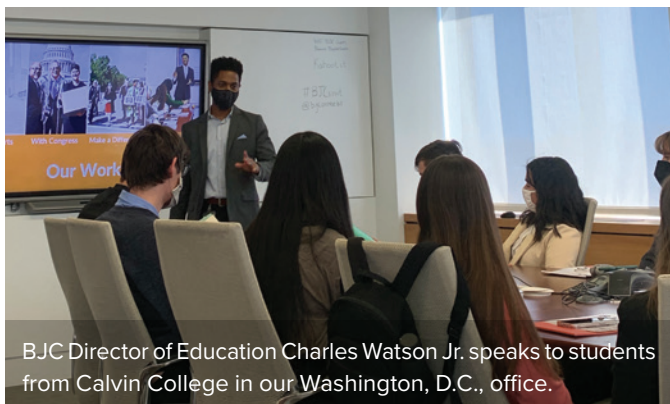
The Supreme Court's pending decisions include a case about a civic organization's request to fly the CHRISTIAN FLAG outside of Boston's city hall. Read more about the fact-specific case of *Shurtleff v. Boston* on page 25.

Indigenous people continue to deal with the ramifications of the 19th century policy of "kill the Indian, save the man," a historic example of Christian nationalism used to justify removing tribes from land that white men wanted and sending Indigenous children to boarding schools far away, extinguishing their culture and religion. Read why BJC is working with Indigenous leaders to SAVE OAK FLAT on pages 12-13.

The Progressive National Baptist Convention is speaking out about the importance of protecting voting rights and having policies that serve all. A member body of BJC and the denominational home of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., PNBC is continuing the call for justice and ensuring our government does not just protect the rights of a few. Read more on pages 18-19.

BJC across the country

Follow us on social media to see more photos of BJC staff members at virtual and in-person events, as we preach and lead discussions on our work supporting faith freedom for all.



BJC Director of Education Charles Watson Jr. speaks to students from Calvin College in our Washington, D.C., office.



BJC Executive Director Amanda Tyler brings greetings at the meeting of the Progressive National Baptist Convention in Atlanta, Georgia.



The Rev. Jennifer Hawks, BJC's associate general counsel, speaks to the youth group at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Litchfield Park, Arizona.



The Rev. Dr. Dan Hamil, BJC's director of strategic partnerships, preaches at Lakeshore Baptist Church in Oakland, California.

Working together to dismantle Christian nationalism

By Amanda Tyler, BJC Executive Director



For nearly three years now, BJC has been focusing attention on Christian nationalism — defining it, recognizing it and understanding the dangers it poses to American democracy and Christianity itself. Since we first organized and launched Christians Against Christian Nationalism in July 2019, tens of thousands of people have used and shared our resources in their efforts to dismantle Christian nationalism in their communities and congregations.

Earlier this year, in partnership with our friends at the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), BJC published a new groundbreaking report on Christian nationalism and its role in the January 6 insurrection. As reported in this magazine (pages 6-9), this report provides the most comprehensive accounting to date of the role that Christian nationalism played in justifying, bolstering and intensifying the attack on the U.S. Capitol. The report focuses not only on the events of January 6 itself, but it looks at events, rallies and networks assembled in advance of the attack. No one who sees the evidence can deny that Christian nationalism played a role in the insurrection.

Since its release in February, the report has garnered widespread attention in the media, the public and by members of Congress. In a speech on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives on March 31, Rep. Jared Huffman, D-Calif., commended the BJC/FFRF report. Jack Jenkins, a reporter for Religion News Service, noted that this was the first time that a member of Congress had explicitly linked Christian nationalism to January 6 in a floor speech.

The report is not just a historical accounting. It provides an urgent warning for everyone to work against Christian nationalism now in order to protect American democracy. January 6 was a wake-up call for many to just how dangerous Christian nationalism is in the hands of violent extremists. But the alarm is still ringing. We hear it in the speeches that are part of the “ReAwaken America Tour” currently making its way through churches across the country, where election lies and pandemic

conspiracy theories are sandwiched between praise music and prayers. The false narrative of a “stolen election” has fueled voter suppression bills in state legislatures. The idea that God has preordained an election result or that a political candidate is a messiah leads some people to believe that the only legitimate election is one in which their candidate wins. The proliferation of Christian nationalism is eroding trust in elections and democracy.

Dismantling Christian nationalism will take a broad and diverse coalition of people — different in perspective yet united in support for everyone’s religious freedom. It was that spirit of collaboration that led us to work with FFRF on this important report. We come at the work differently — BJC as a faith-based organization, FFRF as a secular organization — but we both agree that keeping the institutions of religion and government separate is the best way to protect everyone’s freedom, and it’s critical to countering Christian nationalism.

A Christian group working with a group of atheists, agnostics and skeptics of any pedigree also affirms one of the core principles of religious freedom as stated in the Christians Against Christian Nationalism statement: one’s religious affiliation, or lack thereof, should be irrelevant to one’s standing in the civic community. I was saddened, though not surprised, to see the hateful invectives levied against FFRF, questioning its motives and its patriotism for calling out Christian nationalism.

This experience showed me yet again the privilege that we as Christians (and particularly white Christians) continue to enjoy due to Christian nationalism. I believe that those of us who are white Christians and lead predominantly white institutions have a special responsibility to call out and work to dismantle Christian nationalism. Our involvement is not alone sufficient, but it is necessary if we are to make progress. I am grateful for your involvement in this cause and your support of BJC as we continue to sound the alarm about Christian nationalism.

Justice Stephen Breyer to retire from the Supreme Court in 2022

On January 26, Justice Stephen Breyer announced he will retire from the U.S. Supreme Court at the end of the 2022 term.

Nominated by President Bill Clinton, Justice Breyer began serving on the Court in 1994, writing more than 500 opinions of the Court during his tenure.

In 2012, Justice Breyer came to the opening of BJC's Center for Religious Liberty. In his remarks, Breyer mentioned a book by a member of the British Supreme Court that made an impression on him. "If you want to look to the foundation of our liberty," he recalled of Lord Radcliffe's *The Law and Its Compass*, "look to the freedom of religion."

President Joe Biden nominated Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, a former clerk of Breyer, to succeed him on the Supreme Court. She was confirmed by the U.S. Senate, but Jackson will not assume the bench until Breyer steps down at the end of this term. See page 5 for more.



Justice Stephen Breyer speaks at the opening of BJC's Center for Religious Liberty in 2012, saying that "when you file briefs, they help." He continued, "It doesn't mean you always win," drawing laughter from the audience. Next to him is BJC Executive Director Brent Walker and General Counsel Holly Hollman.

Court rules in favor of religious practices in the execution chamber

On March 24, the U.S. Supreme Court held that a death row inmate is entitled to have his pastor physically touch him and pray aloud over him as he is executed. The 8-1 decision in *Ramirez v. Collier* by Chief Justice John Roberts also instructs lower courts presented with these types of questions to order accommodations of religious practices instead of stays of executions as the appropriate balancing of interests between the state and the inmate.

The case was brought under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), which requires prison officials to accommodate the religious practices of inmates unless there is a compelling government interest to deny the request. Even then, the prison officials can only restrict the religious practice to the extent necessary to achieve the government interest.

In this case, the state alleged that allowing the pastor to touch the inmate and pray aloud would interfere with the execution protocols; therefore, a complete ban on the religious practices was necessary. The Court's

opinion acknowledges a state's clear interest in its execution protocols but held that Texas has, to date, failed to show why the protocols require a total ban on these practices, noting the history of chaplains engaging in final religious acts with condemned prisoners and the fact that physical touch and audible prayer have occurred in a number of executions in different U.S. prison systems without incident.

BJC joined a brief in this case to defend the rights of the prisoner. Led by the Christian Legal Society, the brief also was joined by the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Association of Evangelicals and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, among others. The brief argued that because Texas had failed to offer specific proof of why a total ban was necessary, the inmate's request for audible prayer and the laying on of hands should be granted under RLUIPA.

—BJC Associate General Counsel Jennifer Hawks

For analysis of additional Supreme Court cases, check out the *Respecting Religion* podcast series. You can read excerpts from an episode on pages 24-25 of this magazine.

Ketanji Brown Jackson's record

By Holly Hollman, BJC General Counsel



Editor's Note: Ketanji Brown Jackson was confirmed to be the next justice on the U.S. Supreme Court on April 7 by a Senate vote of 53-47. Visit our website for details of the religious liberty conversations during her confirmation hearings.

President Joe Biden's nomination of D.C. Circuit Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the U.S. Supreme Court fulfills a campaign promise and provides a tremendous opportunity for the Court and the country. Jackson will be the first Black woman to serve as a U.S. Supreme Court justice, the culmination of a life and career spent working in law. Her credentials are stellar and well-known by now.

Judge Jackson's remarks at the White House when President Biden announced her nomination and introduced her provided a small glimpse into her personality beyond her credentials. She began by acknowledging her faith and her family. Her parents were public school teachers, having attended segregated primary schools and then attending historically Black colleges and universities. She spoke about having family members in law enforcement and a relative serving time in the criminal justice system. Jackson gave an eloquent tribute to Justice Stephen Breyer for his influence, noting that he exemplified "the highest level of skill and integrity while also being guided by civility, grace, pragmatism, and generosity of spirit." Statements from colleagues and her former clerks indicate that she has similar qualities.

As a nominee of a president of the same party that nominated the justice she would replace, it is not expected that Jackson will change the balance of the Court from a political or ideological perspective. Yet, all new justices change the Court in some way, bringing their experiences to bear and forming working relationships among the other justices.

Jackson has not specified her religious affiliation, though her public statements and those of her friends have said her faith is very important to her. She has some experience with religious institutions and the issues they face, having once served on the board of a Christian K-12 school. When questioned about the statement of faith on the school's website, she did not comment on the content and said that she primarily provided fundraising assistance. She also cited the Constitution's ban on any religious test for officeholders and noted that judges are required to set aside all personal beliefs,

including religious beliefs, when ruling in cases.

A review of her cases reveals only a couple that involve religion claims, such as religious discrimination in the workplace and the rules of standing that are necessary to bring religious liberty claims. In answers to written questions from senators following her previous confirmation hearings, she repeatedly noted that "the Free Exercise Clause is a fundamental and foundational constitutional right" and demonstrated familiarity with the major sources of religious liberty law and recent developments. She wrote that she has "not expressed any personal views of the scope and contours of the fundamental right to religious liberty" and that it would not be appropriate to do so. She also stated that the Supreme Court "is working through the doctrine," noting specific recent decisions addressing "what it means to treat religion differently." These references indicate an understanding that there is a shift occurring on the Court as it reevaluates the scope of religious liberty in a variety of contexts, including in cases addressing the application of employment laws to religious institutions, government funding of religious institutions, and the application of public health regulations to religious gatherings.

Jackson, like her predecessor, will have opportunities to shape church-state law. While Justice Breyer never wrote a majority opinion in a religious liberty case, he was active in oral arguments and wrote many concurring and dissenting opinions that influenced decisions. His most notable contribution to church-state jurisprudence — so far — is probably as the swing vote in the two Ten Commandments cases in 2005, where the Court upheld one display on the state capitol grounds in Texas but struck down displays in county courthouses in Kentucky, finding the Kentucky displays unconstitutional under the Establishment Clause. In the Texas case, Justice Breyer noted the difficulty of finding tests that capture the meaning of the religion clauses and the reality of borderline cases. In this area of the law, and in such cases, he saw "no test-related substitute for the exercise of legal judgment." His concurring opinion explains in detail that such judgment takes into account the context and consequences of a dispute measured against faithful adherence to the underlying purposes of the constitutional provisions at issue. As the Court continues to reevaluate standards for deciding religious liberty cases, it is essential that the next justice demonstrates similar commitment to the purposes of the religion clauses.

Christian nationalism and January 6

New comprehensive report from BJC and the Freedom From Religion Foundation illuminates the role of Christian nationalism in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol

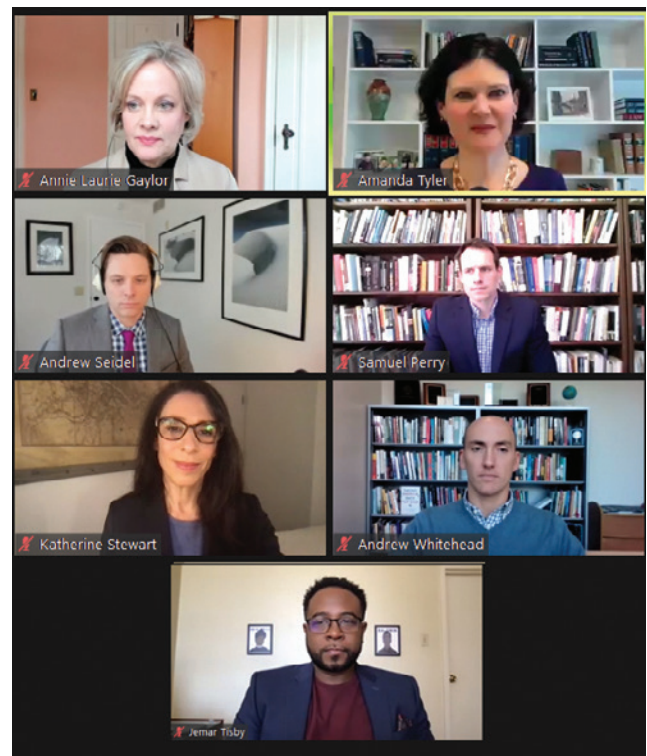
By Cherilyn Crowe Guy and Jaziah Masters

With all of the coverage of what happened at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, the role of Christian nationalism in bolstering, justifying and intensifying the attack has been largely underreported.

BJC and the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) brought together experts and researchers to take a look at the impact of Christian nationalism on the day itself and in the weeks and months leading up to the insurrection, drawing on reporting, videos, statements and images from a myriad of events.

The work culminated in the most comprehensive report on the ideology and its connection to the attack: *Christian Nationalism and the January 6, 2021, Insurrection*. Released to the public on February 9, 2022, it features contributions from prominent experts on Christian nationalism, including Dr. Andrew Whitehead and Dr. Samuel Perry, authors of *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*; Dr. Anthea Butler, the Geraldine R. Segal Professor of American Social Thought at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *White Evangelical Racism*; Katherine Stewart, author of *The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism*; Dr. Jemar Tisby, historian of race and religion and author of *How to Fight Racism* and *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*; Andrew L. Seidel, a constitutional attorney at FFRF and author of *The Founding Myth: Why Christian Nationalism is Un-American*; and Amanda Tyler, executive director of BJC and organizer of the Christians Against Christian Nationalism initiative.

"[T]o oppose and work against Christian nationalism is not to oppose Christianity; in fact, many Christians see opposing Christian nationalism as key to preserving the faith."
—BJC Executive Director Amanda Tyler



The report provides a brief overview and history of white Christian nationalism in the United States, followed by a look at the networks of power and money that prop up the ideology and a detailed blow-by-blow account of events and activities tied to January 6. The end of the report looks toward the future and how our country has responded.

As the report lays out, Christian nationalism is a political ideology and cultural framework that seeks to merge American and Christian identities, distorting both the Christian faith and

America's system of government.

"Christian nationalism is not Christianity, though it is not accurate to say that Christian nationalism has nothing to do with Christianity," wrote Tyler in the introduction to the report. She explained that Christian nationalism relies on Christian imagery and language, and the political ideology continues to be rebuked by many people, including Christian clergy and laity.

"In other words, to oppose and work against Christian nationalism is not to oppose Christianity; in fact, many Christians see opposing Christian nationalism as key to preserving the faith," Tyler wrote.

Many of the authors came together for a live event releasing the report on February 9, speaking about their work in a webinar.

The extensive document begins with a sociological explanation of Christian nationalism in America and the demographics that underlie this ideology, written by Dr. Whitehead and Dr. Perry. They shared more about their research in the live webinar.

Dr. Whitehead pointed out that white Christian nationalism is a key part of the story in making sense of January 6.

"In a variety of surveys that we've collected and others have collected throughout 2021, we find that white Christian nationalism not only provided theological cover for the insurrection — with this idea of this is a country that was 'given to us' by God and we have to take it back — but also as a part of mutually reinforcing other important influences motivating the violence that we saw," Dr. Whitehead said, noting that two-thirds of white Americans who strongly embrace Christian nationalism believe the 2020 election was rigged and did not reflect the "will of the people."

Dr. Perry said that recent research reveals new, troubling ways Christian nationalism is reshaping the understanding of the insurrection. He noted that data collected between February 2021 and August 2021 shows that people who subscribe to the ideology have doubled in their support of the rioters who were at the Capitol.

"We feel like this is absolutely necessary to look out for how Christian nationalism is being used in conjunction with conspiracy theory, in conjunction with misinformation and siloing of information sources," Dr. Perry said. "We believe this is going to be a powerful motivator for future and potential violence."

"America will never be the Christian nation that Christian nationalists want, because the moment it becomes a Christian nation, it will cease to be America."

Andrew Seidel



"In contrast to white Christian nationalism, Black Christians have historically tended to embrace a kind of patriotism that leads to an expansion of democratic processes, the inclusion of marginalized people, and a call for the nation to live up to its foundational ideals."

Dr. Jemar Tisby



"The strength of the [Christian nationalism] movement is in its dense organizational infrastructure ... working together for common political aims."

Katherine Stewart





“We feel like this is absolutely necessary to look out for how Christian nationalism is being used in conjunction with conspiracy theory, in conjunction with misinformation and siloing of information sources . . . We believe this is going to be a powerful motivator for future and potential violence.”

Dr. Samuel Perry

In a section on white Christian nationalism, Dr. Butler looked at how it has been a unifying theme for a particular type of narrative about America: One that says the country is a divinely appointed nation that is Christian and was established on Christian principles, with white men as the leaders. “This narrative has been employed in various ways throughout our nation’s history, in peacetime, war, expansion, and internal strife,” she wrote.

After noting the Confederate constitution invoked “the favor and guidance of Almighty God,” Dr. Butler shared how the Confederate defeat was turned into a “noble cause” that continued to focus on Christian themes and the sacralization of its war dead. “Using monuments to support their cause, they created physical monuments that would later be rallying points for modern day conflicts, such as the Charlottesville rally in August 2017.”

Dr. Tisby wrote a section exploring the different ways Black Christian communities fuse faith and political action, pointing out

that “a Christian commitment to God and country does not always mean making America a white man’s country.”

During the webinar, Dr. Tisby expounded on the difference.

“Although white Christian nationalists have an understanding of religion that leads them to a very exclusionary, xenophobic, racist expression, there are other examples — such as Black Christians — who have understood their faith as motivating them toward a multi-racial democracy,” he said.

Stewart’s section explored the network of leadership tied to Christian nationalism.

“The strength of the movement is in its dense organizational infrastructure: a closely interconnected network of right-wing policy groups, legal advocacy organizations, legislative initiatives, sophisticated data operations, networking groups, leadership training initiatives, and media and messaging platforms, all working together for common political aims,” she wrote.

In the webinar, Stewart laid out three

conditions essential in enabling the January 6 coup attempt: An information bubble where a large block of supporters are separated from other facts, a promotion of a feeling of persecution and directing that at political enemies, and a belief that “the legitimacy of the United States government derives from its commitment to a particular religious and cultural heritage, and not from its democratic form.”

Stewart explained the cost of shifting beliefs about the country.

“It’s astonishing to so many of us that the leaders of the January 6th attack styled themselves as patriots, but it makes a glimmer of sense once we start to understand that their allegiance is to a belief in blood, earth and religion rather than to the mere idea of a government of the people, by the people and for the people,” she said.

The bulk of the report exposes the role this political ideology played in fomenting the insurrection, with two sections written by Seidel that explore in detail the events that served as “dry runs” for January 6



“[W]e find that white Christian nationalism not only provided theological cover for the insurrection — with this idea of this is a country that was ‘given to us’ by God and we have to take it back — but also as a part of mutually reinforcing other important influences motivating the violence that we saw.”

Dr. Andrew Whitehead

and what happened on the day itself. Both sections are heavily documented with photographs and links to videos showing the statements, signage and symbols of Christian nationalism.

Christian nationalism wasn't the only ideology that led to the events of January 6, but it played a role.

"Christian nationalism created a permission structure that gave the insurrectionists the moral and mental license that they needed to attack our government and attempt to overturn a free and fair election," Seidel said during the webinar. "The attackers told us loudly and repeatedly what they believed and why it justified the attack. They told us about their Christian nationalism, and we really ought to listen to them. If we ignore the ideology that justified this attack in their minds, we are inviting future attacks because Christian nationalism is an existential threat to the American republic."

The report concludes with a section from Tyler exploring how Christian leaders responded to Christian nationalism and calling for a widespread recommitment to foundational values of religious freedom for all.

"From my personal perspective as a Christian, seeing signs of my faith on display [on January 6] filled me with anger and frustration," Tyler said during the webinar. "The attackers used Christianity as a kind of mascot, trying to lend credibility and social acceptability to their terrorism, and in the process, they sullied Christianity and Jesus in the hearts and minds of people all over the world."

The report's focus on the events leading up to and on January 6 does not suggest that this is the sole example or manifestation of Christian nationalism in the United States today.

As Tyler writes in the report, dismantling Christian nationalism will take a broad and diverse response from individuals and organizations committed to effecting change, and it will take generations to dismantle. Just one example is how BJC and Freedom From Religion Foundation came together to create this report. The two organizations both advocate for the institutional separation of government and religion, albeit from two very different perspectives.

"As we learn more about Christian nationalism and how it threatens to destroy American democracy, we are even more convinced of the need for a national commitment — from religious and secular groups and individuals — to furthering the American ideal that our belonging in American society is not in any way conditioned on or connected to our religious identity," wrote Tyler. "Standing against Christian nationalism is standing up for everyone's religious freedom — the freedom to practice any faith or no faith without unnecessary interference by government."

"America is really a shared idea, and Christian nationalism refuses to share," Seidel said during the webinar. "It excludes non-Christians, and the 'wrong kind' of Christians, as this report shows. America will never be the Christian nation that Christian nationalists want, because the moment it becomes a Christian nation, it will cease to be America."



Led by BJC and the Freedom From Religion Foundation, this report contains the most comprehensive account to date of Christian nationalism and its role in the January 6 insurrection. The scale and severity of the January 6 attack warrant a dedicated report of this kind.

The largest sections of the report provide original source material — including photos and links to videos — to give an on-the-ground view at what happened, what was said, and how some rioters used a fusion of American and Christian identities to justify and carry out an attack on the U.S. Capitol. From the leader of a rally saying "'Hallelujah' is American for 'Praise the Lord'" to the writing of "In God We Trust" on a gallow to the prayer in the Senate chamber by the invaders to the QAnon Shaman likening doubters of the January 6 victory to those who doubted the divinity of Jesus, the words, images and videos speak for themselves.

You can access the full 63-page report and watch a video of the webinar by visiting BJCOnline.org/jan6report.

Read the report



Voices of Native American Faith Freedom

November marked National American Indian Heritage Month, and BJC hosted conversations with Indigenous voices to talk about faith freedom in their community and contexts.

Each conversation with BJC Director of Education Charles Watson Jr. is available on BJC's Facebook page and YouTube Channel. You also can watch them by visiting [BJCOnline.org/facebook-live](https://www.bjc.org/facebook-live).

Here are just a few moments from the rich conversations. The following pages also discuss BJC's work with Indigenous leaders to save sacred land in the Southwest, and we hope you will join us in June for our annual luncheon to hear from more Indigenous voices (see page 21).



“Essentially, these boarding schools [run by churches and the government] taught that to be a Christian, you had to be an American and ... embrace Western European culture. So, we gave up things like laughing parties and greeting the sunrise with our prayers so that we could enjoy the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus. ... I’ve been kind of on a journey of understanding what does it mean to be Native American — to be Navajo — but also to be a Christian. How do I follow Jesus as a Navajo man?”

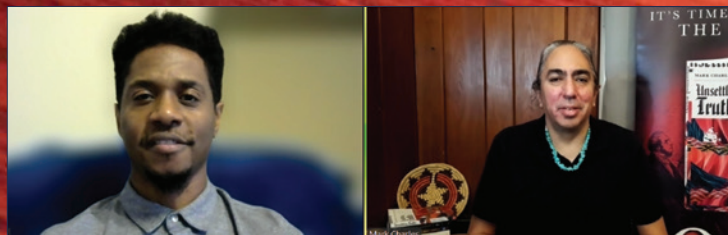
“Our Declaration of Independence begins with a very inclusive term: ... All men are created equal. Thirty lines later, it refers to natives as ‘merciless Indian Savages.’”

“When you have a nation that believes its job is to be Christian, now you’re not only having to find a way to share your faith and invite people to share it with you; but now, you need to find a way to compel people. And that’s where you run into a problem, right?”



Mark Charles

2020 independent presidential candidate
and author of *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing,
Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of
Discovery*



Rev. Dr. Mitch Randall
CEO of Good Faith Media

“The genocide of Native Americans, Indigenous people, and the enslavement of Africans: That’s how the United States of America was built. ... It does not make this country any less great. In fact, if we can be honest about our origins — if we can come to grips about those evils that haunt us as a country — then it will make us a better country: to understand that history and to embrace it and say, ‘never, ever again.’”

“Manifest Destiny was used as a theological and political ideology to steal lands and conquer the Indigenous people of North America. ... I believe that the remnants of Manifest Destiny still exist today. There are people who believe simply because of who they are, how they believe, how they vote, how much power and influence and wealth they have, that the laws do not matter for them. They can do as they will.”

Standing up to #SaveOakFlat

What if your elected officials told you that your sacred place mattered less than that of a different congregation nearby? That's the issue facing the San Carlos Apache Tribe in their struggle to save *Chí'chil Bitdagoteel* — their sacred land in Arizona that is loosely translated in English as "Oak Flat." The land is threatened with destruction: If the federal government gives Oak Flat to the foreign mining operation Resolution Copper, the area will be permanently destroyed. And time is running out.

BJC is fighting to save *Chí'chil Bitdagoteel*, and we invite you to join us. BJC built a coalition of 80 religious and religious freedom groups to advocate for this sacred land. Together, we sent letters to President Joe Biden and to Congress, and we continue to have meetings with Capitol Hill offices to talk about the need for the Save Oak Flat Act. Earlier this year, BJC Associate General Counsel Jennifer Hawks traveled to Oak Flat to learn from tribal leaders and hear more about why this sacred land matters to them.



During an event in Arizona, Dr. Wendsler Nosie shared the history of the Apache tribe and Oak Flat. The federal government forcibly removed the Apache from Oak Flat and other ancestral lands in the late 19th century and confined them to the newly created San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation on a nearby piece of land, nicknamed "Hell's 40 acres." Dr. Nosie described the reservation as the "oldest concentration camp still in existence."



Chí'chil Bitdagoteel was inhabited long before the founding of the United States. Its petroglyphs and hundreds of Indigenous archaeological sites remind us that *Chí'chil Bitdagoteel* is one of America's historic treasures.



Barred from their homeland, Dr. Nosie shared how generations kept alive the stories of Oak Flat and the ceremonies that took place there. Parents told their children, "You will be the one who returns to Oak Flat," and those children said the same to their children, and the hope continued. Dr. Nosie accepted this ancestral call and returned to Oak Flat.



Dr. Nosie's granddaughter, Naelyn Pike, shared the significance of having her coming of age ceremony at Oak Flat. She has picked up her grandfather's mantle, telling the crowd that she is prepared to die to protect *Chí'chil Bitdagoteel*.

Oak Flat is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its religious and cultural significance. The 19th century policy of "kill the Indian, save the man" is a historic example of Christian nationalism. It was used to justify removing the Apache from land that white men wanted and to banish them to land that white men didn't want. The policy was used to justify rounding up Indigenous children and sending them to boarding schools far away, with the goal of extinguishing all traces of tribal life, culture and religion. Despite all these eradication efforts, the San Carlos Apache and other tribes with historic ties to *Chí'chil Bitdagoteel* still hold Oak Flat as sacred. Learn more and get additional resources at BJCOnline.org/SaveOakFlat.



What is Oak Flat?

Chí'chil Bítłdagoteel, loosely translated as “Oak Flat” in English, is an ancient sacred site for the Apache and several other tribes. It was an ancestral burial ground and a source for food, water and medicinal plants. It is the only place where certain religious rituals can be performed.

Why is this land at risk?

The federal government is poised to give Oak Flat to a foreign mining operation so that a low-grade copper deposit under it can be mined. The crater that will swallow Oak Flat will be almost 2 miles wide and up to 1,100 feet deep — that's the length of the Golden Gate Bridge and more than three times the height of the Statue of Liberty.



Why does BJC support the Save Oak Flat Act?

Oak Flat is a sacred outdoor sanctuary for the Apache and other western tribes that should continue to be protected. Sacred land is a place where a people uniquely encounter the divine. The Apache venerate Oak Flat as one place where prayers can go directly to the Creator, who gave life to all things. The sacredness is not lessened because their tradition does not build a steeple to mark it.

Why do other groups support the Save Oak Flat Act?

Tribal Nations

Chí'chil Bítłdagoteel is a sacred site where religious rites and cultural ceremonies are performed. The federal government has a treaty obligation to protect it.

Environmental

The new mine will destroy the local water tables and is expected to consume enough water to supply a city of around 140,000 residents every year for 50 years. This comes at a time when Arizonans are being asked to conserve water in a megadrought.

Track Record of Destruction

The primary owner of Resolution Copper, LLC, is Australian mining company Rio Tinto. To expand a mine in 2020, Rio Tinto destroyed Australia's Juukan Gorge, an Indigenous sacred site with evidence of continuous human habitation for more than 46,000 years.

Gift to Foreign Governments

China stands to financially profit off both the extraction and refinement of America's copper supply. Chinese-backed businesses Chinalco and Bank of China own approximately 30% of Rio Tinto. The copper ore is expected to be shipped through Mexico to China for refinement, as American smelting companies are at capacity.

Recreational

Oak Flat is the premier rock climbing and bouldering area in central Arizona and the site of the world's largest rock climbing competition. Losing Oak Flat to mining would be the largest loss of a climbing area in the history of the United States.

Protecting America's History

Oak Flat is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its religious and cultural significance.

What can I do?

Contact your members of Congress and ask them to co-sponsor the Save Oak Flat Act (H.R. 1884/S. 915).
Only Congress can permanently save Oak Flat.

Your gifts to BJC support our work standing with others.
You can support these efforts and more at any time by making a donation at BJCOnline.org/give.



Public school teachers: Vanguard defenders of religious freedom

By Rev. Jennifer Hawks
BJC Associate General Counsel

Early in my public school education, I learned there were three branches of government, but it was my U.S. government teacher, Mrs. Ruth Dunning, who made sure I understood how government works. She properly sensed that the class full of honors students had not really grasped why civics class should be a required course. In the tradition of all great teachers, she transformed “government” from a nebulous concept to something immediately relevant. No easy task for a petite woman standing before 20 know-it-all seniors!

She asked us to describe the government and wouldn’t settle for simply naming the three branches — legislative, executive and judicial. “Who are the three branches?” she demanded. We quickly called out the obvious answers: president, Congress and Supreme Court. She wrote them on the chalkboard but then asked, “Who else?” So, we named the state and local office titles: governor, mayor, legislature, city council and court system. “Yes,” she replied, “and who else?” We eventually filled the board with other entities, but she kept asking, “Who else?”

You see, there was one government entity we were all very closely connected to but had overlooked. It’s probably the first government entity most of us knowingly interact with — public schools. She wanted to make sure that we understood that she was “the government” in our public school classroom. Education is one of the most important functions for state and local governments, and public school personnel are their official representatives.

Like other governmental entities, the public schools must follow the Constitution. Public school teachers and administrators protect students’ constitutional rights, including religious freedom. In doing so they prepare students to thrive within the diversity of our communities. Public school teachers are therefore not only the frontline examples of government at work in the lives of its citizens but also the defenders of religious freedom for 90% of U.S. schoolchildren.

Public schools are often a microcosm of larger societal debates. The intersection of public education and religion is no exception. Who should teach a child what it means to be a person of faith or how to engage in religious practices? The resounding answer has always been parents, houses

of worship, clergy and others; never the government.

Since the 1960s with the school prayer cases, the U.S. Supreme Court has been clear that public schools must protect students’ voluntary religious expression and cannot force religion on students by telling them when, where or how to pray.

In the 1980s, Congress entered the debate and passed the Equal Access Act, which ensures that students have the right to form a religious club if the school permits any clubs not directly tied to courses taught at the school. For example, if the school has a chess club, then students wishing to gather to explore Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Native American spirituality or any other religious tradition must be allowed to do so on an equal basis with the chess club. To ensure these gatherings are voluntary, student-led and student-initiated, the law requires that school personnel in attendance do not participate in the religious activity.

Since the 1990s, Democratic and Republican administrations have released guidance on religious expression in public schools. This guidance always contains some limitations on teachers’ personal religious expression to ensure that students’ rights are protected. The most recent presidential guidance is the January 2020 guidance released by the Trump administration, which includes:

When acting in their official capacities as representatives of the State, teachers, school administrators, and other school employees are prohibited by the First Amendment from encouraging or discouraging prayer, and from actively participating in such activity with students.

This makes sense. While on duty, public school teachers are the government. Their actions can protect or subvert the religious freedom of students.

BJC recently filed a brief that continues in this long, uncontroversial tradition of protecting the religious freedom of public school students. The U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments April 25 in *Kennedy v. Bremerton*, a case brought by a coach who claims the unprecedented right to pray with students while in his official capacity.

I am grateful every day for our public school teachers and administrators who step up to the challenge of defending constitutional rights, especially religious freedom, for our students and communities.

Public schools protect faith freedom for all

BJC has long recognized and celebrated the positive contributions of public schools. Ninety percent of all students in the United States — children of all faiths and none — are educated in public schools. Public schools demonstrate our country's religious freedom ideals and model how people of all faiths and none can build relationships and trust with each other.

The U.S. Senate passed a resolution to designate the last week of February 2022 as “Public Schools Week,” and we asked members of the BJC community and the BJC Advocacy Team to share about why public schools matter to them. Here are excerpts from three reflections — read more at [BJCOntheHill.Medium.com](https://bjcconthehill.medium.com).



I am a pastor who intentionally sends my children to public school. I am grateful for the public school educators in my kids' classrooms and in my church. They are helping develop adults who can think critically, approach new ideas with openness, and see the gifts in themselves and others, including those who are quite different from them.

—Rev. Robin Anderson



Public schools are places that serve children from every racial, ethnic, socio-economic, sexual and gender identity, and religious background. Voucher programs — which were established to defy desegregation orders in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s (and today) — minimize that diversity due to admission requirements that sometimes isolate religious minorities, poor people, students with disabilities, or those that identify as members of the LGBTQ community.

—Dr. Sabrina Dent



Christian support for public education does not come down to advancing an institutional gain. On the contrary, it is an expression of the common good valued in Christian theology. It means seeking the good of the city and the neighbor (Jeremiah 29, Matthew 25). It comes from our confession of faith — not our self-interest.

—Dr. Stephen Breck Reid

Make a difference



Madison McClendon, BJC Board Treasurer, speaks to board members gathered in D.C. and those joining virtually.

BJC Board of Directors holds first-ever hybrid meeting

After two years of virtual meetings, the BJC Board of Directors met March 7-8, gathering both in Washington, D.C., and through video conferencing.

Composed of representatives of BJC's 16 supporting bodies, board members discussed BJC's work and looked toward the future of defending faith freedom for all.

The meeting included breakout sessions and committee meetings, focusing in on different departments and opportunities for the organization. The board also celebrated the 5-year anniversary of Amanda Tyler serving as executive director and belatedly — due to the pandemic — celebrated the 20-year anniversary of Holly Hollman serving as general counsel (see excerpts from the board's resolutions on the next page).

The next scheduled board meeting will be in the fall of 2022.



Rev. Dr. Lynn Brinkley, BJC Board Chair



Sofi Hersher, BJC Board Secretary



Dr. Sabrina Dent, BJC Board Member



BJC board celebrates anniversaries of Tyler, Hollman

During their meeting March 7, the BJC Board of Directors passed resolutions marking significant anniversaries of service for Amanda Tyler and Holly Hollman. Here are excerpts from those resolutions.

WHEREAS:

Amanda has kept BJC's focus on serving God and God's children by ensuring faith freedom remains available for all,

Amanda's advocacy has driven her to speak on the steps of the Supreme Court to oppose travel bans and policies targeting minority religious groups and to testify before Congress about religious liberty challenges,

Amanda led efforts to organize more than 100 denominations and nearly 5,000 faith leaders in asking Congress to maintain the Johnson Amendment, protecting the integrity of houses of worship from partisan campaigning,

Amanda's determined and prophetic leadership organized and launched the Christians Against Christian Nationalism initiative in 2019, a multi-denominational response to the growing dangers of Christian nationalism that continues to engage in combating the ideology, including responding to how it was used on January 6, 2021,

Amanda has led BJC to interrogate its own history with race relations, leading honest and open conversations about our past failings and how we can forge a more inclusive future,

Amanda continues to raise the alarm that religious freedom can be jeopardized not just by government action but also the actions of individuals, as she leads the charge and sets an example of calling out hateful rhetoric and violence directed at religious minorities in our country,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors of Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty expresses our heartfelt gratitude to Amanda R. Tyler on the occasion of her fifth anniversary of service.

WHEREAS:

Holly's dedication to BJC started with her work as a BJC intern, and continued throughout her career as General Counsel and Associate Executive Director,

Holly is known as an effective defender of religious liberties for everyone by consistently promoting a principled and thoughtful understanding of religious freedom in the United States, which draws upon historic Baptist beliefs and her insightful study about religious liberties as found in American jurisprudence,

Holly's commitment to religious liberty has motivated her to conduct detailed legal research and produce reasoned analysis of church-state issues that arise before Congress, the courts and administrative agencies, which is esteemed and utilized by those within religious and legal communities,

Holly's influence has been far-reaching in both the legal community and in the public arena through her extensive writing, speaking, and media appearances,

Holly has led BJC's involvement in preparing dozens of *amicus* briefs for the Supreme Court, helping shape the interpretation of laws of our nation which pertain to the Constitution's protection of religious liberty and the separation of church and state,

Holly mentors BJC staff and instructs Georgetown Law students toward a deeper understanding of the separation of church and state, teaching them to reflect thoughtfully about issues of faith and freedom,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors of Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty expresses heartfelt gratitude to Holly Hollman on the occasion of her 20th anniversary of service.

You can celebrate these accomplishments by giving to BJC in honor of Amanda or Holly, and you can give in honor of anyone at any time. Just go to [BJCOnline.org/give](https://www.bjc.org/give) and let us know who you want to honor with your donation.



PNBC leads call to action for voting rights, democracy

By Cherilyn Crowe Guy

The Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) is leading the way on efforts to protect voting rights, speaking out publicly and releasing an innovative toolkit to help others make a difference.

On March 21, PNBC leaders and clergy from across the country gathered in Washington, D.C., to make their voices heard on key issues, including the crisis unfolding in Ukraine and the urgency for Congress to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the For The People Act.

“As the denominational home of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it is in our DNA to speak up and speak out regarding social justice and the rights of all people,” said the Rev. Dr. David Peoples, president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, who also serves as pastor of Jabez Missionary Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky.

“We at PNBC are answering the call to stand for justice for all God’s children — here in our country’s court systems, in ensuring access to the ballot box, and in conflicts around the world, including Ukraine and Ethiopia.”

Kicking off the call to action with a press conference held at BJC’s offices on Capitol Hill, the group later marched down Constitution Avenue to hold a rally in front of the U.S. Capitol.

The gathering coincided with the first day of the confirmation hearings for Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, and leaders emphasized the importance of having representation on the U.S. Supreme Court.

“In this nation, we’ve had 115 persons serve on the Supreme Court, and only four of them women, only three persons of color,” said Heather Taylor, a member of the Progressive National Baptist Convention Social Justice Commission. “That means for centuries, the interpretation and application of our

laws in this nation have been dominated by the perspective of the white male.”

Taylor said she did not seek to degrade the perspective or moral compass of white men, but rather to affirm that the integration of the perspective of Black women is long overdue, and perspective matters.

“We must ensure that the Court is representative of the diversity of people it is intended to protect.”

The Rev. Dr. Frederick Douglass Haynes III talked about the threats to voting rights across our country, especially in his home state of Texas. Co-chair of the PNBC Social Justice Commission, Haynes also serves as senior pastor of Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas.

“Senate Bill 1 passed and became law, rooted in a lie,” Haynes said, noting that lies about the 2020 election being “stolen” have led to a crop of new bills since the January 6 insurrection that restrict voting rights. According to PNBC, 48 states have introduced 389 bills that would do so, all since January 2021.

In Texas, Senate Bill 1, which became law in the fall of 2020, adds measures that would make it more difficult to vote in Texas, including reducing voting hours, adding new ID requirements, complicating the process for mail-in ballots and more.

“I’m from Texas, and I’m saying there is something sick and sinful that there are too many Texans who found their requests for a mail-in ballot rejected,” Haynes said.

Haynes called for voting rights legislation that would protect every American.

“Are you going to be America for all, or for the ‘y’all’ who engage in the politics of ruin or rule? And, if we are going to be America, then America will be a land of liberty and justice for all.”

PNBC supports the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R. 4 / S 4), which would ensure that any change to local or state elections are federally reviewed — a process known as “preclearance,” which was part of the original Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 2013, the Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* gutted The Voting Rights Act, calling on Congress to update the formula used to determine which areas were required to seek preclearance. In the eight years since, Congress has not taken action.

The Rev. Willie Francois III, the co-chair of the PNBC Social Justice Commission, also called on Congress to ensure voting rights for all. The senior pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Pleasantville, New Jersey, he referred to PNBC’s leadership in previous civil rights legislation in the 1960s and how that work continues.

“We are saying today: Congress, don’t just want Black votes. Do something about Black lives with your pen and with your legislation, because you cannot be more interested in protecting your procedural vote until you take seriously our votes that put you in office in the first place.”

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, the co-convenor of the National African American Clergy Network and CEO of the Skinner Leadership Institute, talked about protecting democracy around the world. She noted that it’s troubling to watch our country focus on issues in Europe and turn its back on African and Haitian nations.

She also noted the importance of access to voting for everyone in our country.

“Today we say to Congress: The eyes of the world are on you. Do not lecture the world about democracy and put a stop on the ballot box to people of color, the elderly, the disabled, the returning citizens, students, and to say, ‘This is America,’” she said.

“We’re not too tired to keep on marching,” she said.

The group gathered with other clergy to march down Constitution Avenue, sharing a call and response for voting rights and other issues facing so many Americans.

PNBC is one of the country’s leading Black Protestant denominations, formed to give full voice, sterling leadership and active support to the American and world fight for human freedom. Born in the height of the Civil Rights Movement, PNBC now has an estimated membership of 2.5 million people, and it is one of BJC’s member bodies. New generations of Progressive Baptists are continuing the struggle for full voter registration, education and participation in society, economic empowerment and development, and the realization of universal human rights and total human liberation for all people.

The March 21 event is the second time this year PNBC held a large news conference on the issue of voting rights. During their mid-winter board meeting in Atlanta, they brought together members of PNBC and members of the media to discuss the importance of voting rights, announcing plans for the March event, lobbying members of Congress, and registering voters to increase voter rolls.

Visit [PNBC.org](https://pnbc.org) for a toolkit with more information on voting rights and ways you and your church can take action to stand for democracy.



Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner



Dr. Heather Taylor



Rev. Dr. David Peoples



Rev. Willie Francois III

Until someday is today: Continuing the fight to protect voting rights

By Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune



I will probably never forget the pain in my mother's voice after the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Shelby County v. Holder* case. Their ruling gutted two significant provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, legislation which she had fought hard for and put her body on the line to get passed during the Civil Rights Movement.

The Supreme Court struck down provisions that required certain states and local governments to obtain federal preclearance before implementing any changes to their voting laws or practices and contained the coverage formula that determined which jurisdictions were subject to preclearance based on their histories of discrimination in voting.

In doing so, it became open season on voting and democracy in our nation. For my mother, it meant that all the organizing and sacrifices that had been made and the hard-fought battles for freedom and justice in America were being nullified.

"I can't believe we have to go through this again," I remember her saying, as she reflected on sitting in at the Woolworth's lunch counter while she was a college student in Columbia, South Carolina.

My grandparents had set the example for her by helping others in the backcountry of South Carolina to fill out the forms to be able to vote. The KKK burned a cross out in front of their lawn for their efforts.

For many like my mother, this renewed struggle for voting rights feels like the worst kind of *déjà vu*.

American democracy is in peril, and the right to vote is hanging in the balance.

Since the 2020 election, which saw record voter turnout, 19 states have passed laws that will restrict voters from being able to participate in democracy, especially African Americans, people with disabilities and other vulnerable communities.

And the Brennan Center reports that as of mid-January this year, "legislators in at least 27 states have introduced, pre-filed, or carried over 250 bills with restrictive [voting] provisions."

Unsurprisingly, many of the restrictions are in areas that would be considered swing states. In places like Georgia, lawmakers even made it illegal to hand out water to people standing in long lines waiting to vote.

In 2018, I witnessed firsthand the long lines in an area heavily populated by Black voters. People stood in lines for upwards of eight hours in Atlanta and surrounding counties, just to vote.

Organizers helped to alleviate the strain on voters waiting in long lines by handing out water, fruit and other snacks. This was particularly helpful for the elderly and those in line with young children.

By passing legislation to make it illegal to offer this kind of assistance while simultaneously making it harder to vote, Georgia lawmakers, and similar efforts around the country, are sending a

loud and resounding message that during this Jim Crow 2.0 era, they will go to any lengths to suppress the votes of those who don't agree with their policies — even toppling democracy.

Indeed, this nation's refusal to deal with racism and white supremacy, what Jim Wallis and others have called America's original sin, has us on the brink of losing the fundamental right to vote and sliding toward Authoritarianism.

To be clear, this is about power — both real and perceived. A significant part of the electorate, and those from one political party in particular, are afraid that if people are allowed to vote unhindered, especially African Americans, they will no longer be able to win elections and will lose power.

The voracity and widespread nature of these voter-suppression tactics since 2020 are reminiscent of a bygone era of poll taxes and jelly bean tests, where before being allowed to cast their ballots, Black voters had to guess how many jelly beans were in a jar.

Today, we have small numbers of polling places in heavily populated areas, shortened hours for voting, barriers to registering and casting ballots and, in some locations, voter rolls being purged without cause or timely notification so that errors cannot be corrected in time to re-register.

These are all intimidation methods to deter people from being able to exercise what in a democracy is almost sacred — the right to cast our ballots and vote for who we want to represent us.

After months of activism on voting rights, in January, the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act did not have enough support to be filibuster-proof and pass in the U.S. Senate.

This lack of action is an assault on American democracy, as its passage would protect the right to vote, including provisions to prevent state lawmakers from overturning the results of elections in which they don't like the outcome.

As a Christian, I believe it is also an affront to the God-given dignity of all people, who are created in God's image. In my faith tradition, our scriptures teach us that we should not just look out for our own interests but also for the interests of others.

It is a moral imperative for us to fight these renewed efforts at voter suppression.

We must be unmoved in our resolve to continue to advocate for every citizen to be able to cast their ballots without obstruction, obstacles, hindrances, intimidation or unnecessary burdens. Instead, we must intensify our efforts until someday is today and voter suppression is a past memory rather than a present-day reality.

The Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune is the Chief Operating Officer of the National Council of Churches USA. This article first appeared at [GoodFaithMedia.org](https://www.goodfaithmedia.org).

Our growing Faith FULL community

By Danielle A. Tyler, BJC Associate Director of Development

We are eternally grateful to our Faith FULL community of monthly donors. You're a big part of the progress we're making at BJC.

BJC is standing at the intersection of a valuable legacy of upholding the separation of church and state in the courts and illuminating voices of faith that have been silenced. We do whatever it takes to protect faith freedom for all, including educating, engaging, and empowering changemakers to speak out against Christian nationalism and standing up for inclusive voices of faith freedom.

Together, we are ensuring our world welcomes all faith traditions. Every piece of legislation supported, every person empowered, every house of worship restored, begins with this amazing community of monthly donors.

Monthly gifts create meaningful change for students, professionals, faith leaders, families and their communities. Your support in 2021 encouraged us to continue telling the truth, calling our loyal supporters to join us in making change



Faith • FULL

in 2022 and beyond. We work for a change that lasts a lifetime. Your loyal partnership is integral to sustaining that lifetime change.

Stand with BJC as we seek to engage and empower 100 new Faith FULL community members this year. Since our previous edition of *Report from the Capital*, we added 5 new members to our Faith FULL group of monthly donors.

Please consider inviting members of your community to join in this consistent effort for essential change. Join our Faith FULL community this month by going to our website at BJCOnline.org/give-monthly. For more information or for assistance, you can contact me at 202-544-4226, ext. 308, or by email at dt Tyler@BJCOnline.org.

Hear from Indigenous perspectives at the BJC Luncheon

Join us June 30 in Dallas



Indigenous voices will be the center of the 2022 BJC Luncheon. Join us for the first in-person gathering in two years as we meet on Thursday, June 30, in Dallas, Texas, at the Hyatt Regency Dallas Hotel.

During the luncheon, BJC will listen to Indigenous voices on faith freedom, presenting a panel moderated by the Rev. Dr. **Mitch Randall**, the CEO of Good Faith Media and a citizen of the Muscogee Creek Nation. Joining him will be **Dr. Wendsler Nosie**, the former chairman of the San Carlos Apache Tribe and the leader of the fight to save Oak Flat (see pages 12-13); **Dr. Kyle T. Mays**, an Afro-Indigenous (Saginaw Chippewa) writer and scholar of U.S. history, urban studies, race relations and contemporary

popular culture; and **Mariah Humphries**, a Mvskoke Nation citizen, writer and educator.

The event is open to the public, but you must have a ticket to attend.

Tickets are \$55 each, and tables of ten are available for \$600, which include a reserved table and recognition in the program. Young ministers can purchase tickets at a discounted price of \$30 each. Sponsorships are also available to help us bring this to more people.

Purchase tickets and learn more on our website at BJCOnline.org/luncheon.

The luncheon is held in conjunction with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly, but you do not have to attend the assembly to attend the luncheon.

Celebrating freedom fighters

Throughout Black History Month, BJC celebrated the achievements and contributions of Black Americans, profiling leaders on social media who made — and continue to make — an impact in our world. We also included quotes from the leader or reactions from members of the BJC community on how these individuals continue to inspire them. Here are just a few — visit us on Instagram at @BJContheHill to see all the freedom fighters highlighted in February 2022, including a special video from a young changemaker discussing Ida B. Wells.



Barbara Jordan

Rep. Barbara Jordan was the first African American elected to the Texas Senate after Reconstruction and the first African American woman from the South elected to the U.S. Congress. A powerful and accomplished public speaker, Jordan fought for greater economic investment in historically marginalized communities and other civil rights issues, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Equal Rights Amendment. Jordan also worked closely with former BJC Executive Director James Dunn.

“You would do well to pursue your causes with vigor, while remembering that you are a servant of God, not a spokesperson for God — a servant of God, not a spokesperson for God — and remembering that God might well choose to bless an opposing point of view for reasons that have not been revealed to you.”

—Rep. Barbara Jordan



James Cone

Known as the Father of Black liberation theology, Dr. James Cone was a theologian, minister and author. His 1969 book *Black Theology and Black Power* defined and gave a voice to the distinctiveness of theology in the Black church. Cone believed that God was a God of the oppressed. Black liberation theology is an interpretation of the Christian Gospel from the lives and view of those at the lowest status in a society, and Cone used it to argue for racial justice.

“Dr. Cone’s work personally influenced my theology and still challenges me today. I like to say his work is the pinnacle of the Baptist distinctive known as individual priesthood of the believer. Liberation theology forces us to think and challenge interpretations of Scripture that fall short of love. I cherish the moments I had with Dr. Cone in person and through his writings.” —BJC Director of Education Charles Watson Jr.



Sojourner Truth

An abolitionist and women’s rights activist, Sojourner Truth was a powerful orator and preacher who spoke out about the rights of African Americans and women, including the right to vote. Born enslaved as “Isabella Baumfree,” she changed her name to “Sojourner Truth” because she felt called by God to travel and testify. In 1851, she delivered her famous “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech at the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention.

“Then that little man in black there, he says women can’t have as much rights as men, ‘cause Christ wasn’t a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.” —Sojourner Truth



Suzan Johnson Cook

Appointed by President Barack Obama and confirmed by Congress, Suzan Johnson Cook was the first woman and first African American to serve as the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. During her time as a diplomat, she created the Religious Freedom Roundtable and initiated the Female Faces of Faith program. Ambassador Cook also was the first African American woman to be named senior pastor by American Baptist Churches USA (1983) and the first woman chaplain to the New York Police Department (1990).

“It was lonely going into the hearings, formal meetings, board rooms and diplomatic rooms as the only person of color and always as the only woman. ... I was representing the 44th president and the United States of America, the country where my own religious freedom had only been parenthetically discussed.”

—Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook



Fannie Lou Hamer

Fannie Lou Hamer fought to rectify the injustice of African American voter registration in the segregated South. Hamer co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and attempted to run for the Mississippi House of Representatives, but she was barred from the ballot. In 1964, she became one of the first Black women to stand in the U.S. Congress when she protested the Mississippi House election. Her speeches were so powerful that President Lyndon Johnson once called a last-minute press conference so the networks would air him instead of Hamer.

“When I liberate myself, I liberate others. If you don’t speak out ain’t nobody going to speak out for you.”

—Fannie Lou Hamer



Richard Allen

Born enslaved in Delaware, Richard Allen joined the Methodist Society as a teenager and began to preach, attracting the ire of slaveholders. Allen was later able to purchase his freedom, and he moved to Philadelphia. In 1794, he co-founded the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where many continue to worship today. In 1816, he founded the first national Black church in the United States: the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

“Three historical moments come to mind when I think of the Rev. Richard Allen. First, I think of his choice, in 1794, to found Bethel AME Church. When white Methodists abused him and other Black Methodists, he exercised his freedom to worship as he saw fit. His witness has assured generations of AME people that we are justified by God, not other humans. Second, I think of Jarena Lee, who Allen converted to Methodism. I think of his courage when, in 1819, he recognized and supported her call to preach despite her gender. His openness to Black women’s gifts for ministry laid the

groundwork for generations of Black women who preach. Finally, my mind jumps ahead to 1970 when an AME scholar from Arkansas named James H. Cone published his monograph *A Black Theology of Liberation*. Undoubtedly, Allen’s radicalism two centuries earlier set the stage for a scholar from his denomination to become the Father of Black Liberation Theology. Like Allen, Cone’s approach to Black religion was masculinist. However, Cone’s openness to being made new allowed him to train pioneering womanist liberation theologians.

As a Black woman who preaches and thinks theologically, I understand that the origins of my freedom to do so trace back to Richard Allen’s courage in 1794. May his courage continue to inspire us.”

—Rev. Jaimie Crumley, a member of the BJC Board of Directors and a BJC Fellow

‘Respecting Religion’ explores cases facing the Supreme Court

Looking for insight and analysis of upcoming Supreme Court cases? Tune in to BJC’s “Respecting Religion” podcast to hear the latest from BJC Executive Director Amanda Tyler and General Counsel Holly Hollman.

As season three continues this spring, they are keeping up with the avalanche of cases, oral arguments and opinions, sharing in-depth insight into the items that often only receive cursory coverage on the news or in your social media feeds. Subscribe to Respecting Religion on your favorite podcasting provider to be notified of new episodes.

Visit BJCOnline.org/RespectingReligion for a list of our most recent episodes, including show notes that go with each one providing more information and resources. You can also listen to episodes from season one and season two on that page.

Excerpts from Season 3, Episode 10: Supreme Court roundup

Released January 27, 2022

In discussing the Court’s decision to hear *Kennedy v. Bremerton*, a case involving a public school coach who prayed on the field with his students while performing his official duties:

HOLLY: This case comes out of an employment dispute, a public school employee who, the district found, was leading his players in religious exercise, in prayer, prayer with the team which — of course — violates the Establishment Clause’s promise that public entities — public schools — are neutral toward religion. Friends of BJC know we’ve been very active in this space for decades.

Protecting religious freedom in the public schools means ensuring that individuals have the right, of course, to express their religion in ways that do not interfere with education. Students can gather before school for prayer, teachers can pray in the teachers’ lounge, people bow their heads before they eat their meals or before they take their tests.

At the same time, the schools themselves cannot advance religion. So, teachers are not to lead in religious exercises. Coaches, for all the great work they do to be mentors and inspire their students by their personality and sometimes bringing their personal experience in, are not authorized to lead in religious exercises because we know that would often amount to religious coercion, religious interference with the rights of those students. ... All people have the right to send their kids to public school without the fear that the government is going to indoctrinate their kids with regard to religion.

AMANDA: Right. And the understanding in this case is that public school teachers are in a unique position. They are, by virtue of their public status, state employees at this point. They are not able to do the same kinds of

religious exercise that public school students can. They have a different duty and part of that duty — as you stated so well, Holly — is to stay neutral when it comes to religion. And the assistant coach in this case stopped doing that when he insisted on praying publicly and leading students in prayer immediately after these football games.

Now as one might imagine, the coach and his attorneys are portraying the facts very differently in this case and saying that this was a private prayer that was not public in any way. ...

HOLLY: I think, as it comes before the Court now, it will be quite clear now that the coach was not seeking just to pray individually, privately but instead was asking for — and insisting on — the right to pray on the 50-yard line in the midst of his duties as a football coach.

So we’ll be hearing more about that case, and we’ll have plenty of time to look at that as the briefing begins and to examine what was the Court thinking in taking this case on. Are they thinking about really changing course from the decades of jurisprudence that has protected religious liberty in the public schools by ensuring that teachers and administrators do not advance religion in ways that harm the religious liberty interests of their students?

AMANDA: That would be a really troubling direction for the Court to take, if indeed that’s what they’re interested in here with this case.

For a more in-depth discussion of this case, check out Episode 14, released April 14, 2022.

Respecting Religion



In discussing the oral arguments in the case of *Shurtleff v. Boston*, regarding the city's bid to fly a Christian flag on a flagpole outside city hall that was challenged on free speech grounds:

HOLLY: [The oral argument] verified, I think, some things we think about this case that we talked about in the earlier episode. And that is that the determination of this case really just depends on how the Court sees it.

Do they see it as a public forum case where the government cannot keep any voices out based on viewpoint discrimination? Or is it a government-speech case, where of course there is leeway for the government to advance certain speech without having to advance any kind of religious speech?

AMANDA: Yeah, as far as church-state cases go, this one is about as straightforward as they come in that way. And as we noted, it's going to be determined under the Free Speech Clause, not the religious liberty clauses. And it's very fact determinative, and there are very narrow facts.

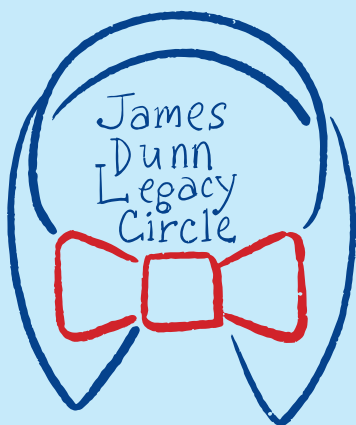
We said we don't know of other policies like this, and that view was also affirmed in the argument by the advocates: this policy that Boston has is really a curious one. ...

Based on what we heard at argument, I think it is very likely that this Court is going to find that that 3rd flagpole in Boston has become a public forum, whether Boston meant to do that or not.

And then I think it is fairly certain that Boston is going to reevaluate its policy and try to exert more control over that to not make it a public forum, because if it is a public forum then the city cannot engage in any kind of viewpoint discrimination, whether it be with Mr. Shurtleff [whose organization requested to fly the flag] or with some other group that might come.

HOLLY: I agree that the Court is likely to side with Mr. Shurtleff, based on their sense that there was not sufficient control exercised to make it clear that it was government speech. And then we'll see if they give some guidance on what kind of rules are required in what kind of forum. I think it would be hard to say it was a wide open public forum. But, even in a *designated* public forum, there are real questions about how a city ... could do so in a way that is effective without inviting offensive speech, without having to take any kind of flag.





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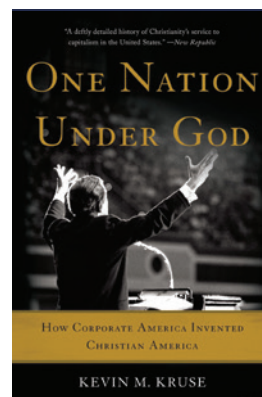
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Join members of the BJC community from across the country for our next book club!

In the month of May, we will read *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* by Kevin M. Kruse. Participants will gather virtually by Zoom on May 3, 10, 17 and 24 at 6:30 p.m. Eastern Time to discuss sections of the book.

The BJC Book Club is free and open to all — you just have to get a copy of the book on your own.

Visit BJCOnline.org/BookClub for details and to sign up for our May discussions! Contact BJC Programs Assistant Christine Rigodon with questions at crigodon@BJCOnline.org.



The war in Ukraine and religious liberty

A multitude of tragedies are unfolding in Ukraine as a result of Russia's invasion. Among them is the increased threat to religious liberty in Ukraine if subject to Russian rule.

In an interview with Religion News Service, theologian and author Bradley Nassif explains that, for starters, the war on Ukraine could have significant ramifications for the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, where tensions between the Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox churches have escalated in recent years.

"Evangelicals who take a 'who cares' attitude to what is going on now in Ukraine will be in for a big surprise once the dust settles," Nassif warns. "One needs only to look at what the Russians did to evangelicals after they annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014."

The State Department's most recent Annual Report on Religious Freedom notes that Russia employs a "disinformation campaign to fuel further conflict between the two churches."

Especially concerning is the plight of religious minorities in Russia. The country is on the State Department's Special Watch List because it "engages in or tolerates severe violations of religious freedom." As the State Department detailed in its report, religious persecution in a variety of forms is rampant in Russia.

—Don Byrd

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Join BJC in Dallas on June 30

We will be gathering to listen and learn from Indigenous voices on faith freedom at our luncheon on Thursday, June 30, in Texas. BJCOnline.org/luncheon



Save Oak Flat

See pages 12-13 to hear how BJC is working to save spaces sacred to our Indigenous neighbors. Your generous donations support our work with others and bringing groups together. BJCOnline.org/give